Depot Town Rag

Volume 14, Number 1 *"All the news in one block in one month."*

100% FREE Rag content

January 1991

- DTA History
- Quilting bee game
- **Cookie Monster**
- *Code Ode*

(silly new song for the City)

. . . and other strictly local stuff

A Publication of the DEPOT TOWN ASSOCIATION, INC. The Old Caboose, 400 Market Place, Ypsilanti, MI 48198

We've got you covered -- with quilts!

One of the district's oldest traditions: argument!

Controversial quilts? Come on, now!?

When Association members chose 'quilts' to be the underlying theme for the district's 1991 promotions, many hoped it would be innocuous and creative enough to bring together the many interests of this 'patchwork of commercial activity' in Depot Town. But the theme only brought to the surface one of the block's oldest traditions: diversity. And controversy. And more opinions than anyone outside of the district wants to listen to.

What's the argument about with quilts? Well, there's the schism between 'traditional' quilters and 'contemporary' quilters. Sound like the old east side/west side flap in Ypsilanti? Does it remind you of downtown/Depot Town rifts of the past? Will the Chamber of Commerce Political Action Committee take a stand? What about the Democrats and Republicans? Where do they stand on the issue? Will we decide in the City's spring election?

Most upbeat philosophers on the block think the area can stand a diversity of opinion when it comes to this year's exploitation of the quilt theme in window displays, exhibits and ads, however.

Pam Hamlin tells about the 1976 exhibition of quilts in Athens, Ohio, which first separated the traditionalists from the 'new age' quilters. The exhibition's opening was the typical art gallery wine-and-cheese gala with attendees oooohing and ahhhhhing over a 'modern' quilt showing a life-size sewn nude draped over a pink satin poof chair. Other works in the show seemed to have been thrown together by former action painters and abstract impressionists. The gallery-going crowd was ecstatic. By the exhibit's second day, the women from Appalachia had arrived to count how many stitches to the inch — and were not at all pleased with the universality of the show.

Quilters have been evenly divided since. Magazines which cover the interest/industry have been petitioned by their readerships to include more (or less) of the other point of view and most such publications now include a little of both and even some in-between styles. A quick review of the literature reveals that both sides recognize the other, even if they don't like each other.

One of the Depot Town district's quilt afficianadoes had a 'somber' tree theme in a quilt of her own design. A friend commented on its morbidity, so she added some papier mache flowers to it. Another in her collection includes tiny toy plastic horses - wrapped in metallic wire and pinned (sewn? stitched? glued? stapled?) to the background fabric. What would the mountain women think of that? Will gripper fasteners be used soon, so the pieces can be rearranged at will?

Even quiltdom has its controversies. The recent popularity of grocery store craft magazines has created a cutesy country quilt decorating motif that threatens to become a New American Kitsch Quilt theme. If you're finally into Crazy Quilt, then watch the Depot Town displays in the coming year for examples of traditional quilts, crazy quilts, contemporary quilts, fine arts quilts and, perhaps, and maybe even some 'controversial' quilts.

Depot People:

Campus coverage begins

This month marks the beginning of *The Depot Town Rag's* distribution on the Eastern Michgian University campus. Most folks felt the old days were over . . . when we used to warn the Normal School students about the evils of the railroad district.

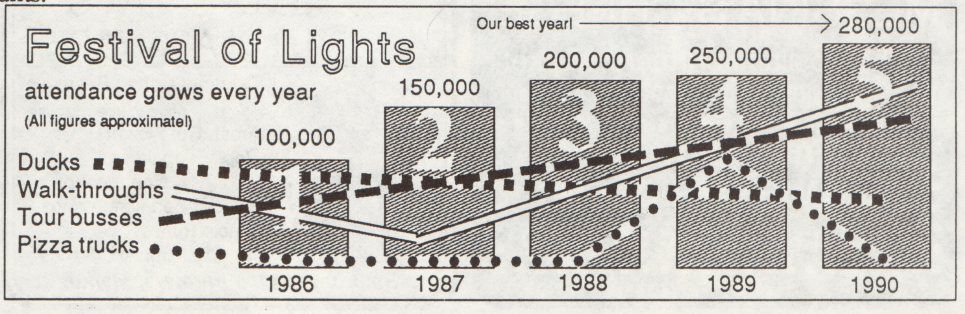
Today's college students may be looking for a quieter place than the campus. Don't be surprised to see them studying at the next table. Or whatever it is they do these days.

Depot Town DDA to meet semi-annually

DDA chair, Paul Fetters, has announced April 11, 1991 for the next meeting of the Depot Town Downtown Development Authority. All interested parties are invited to the 7:30 pm meeting in the Freighrhouse.

Research Committee:

The Committee's series, *Edifice Complex - Local History that Never Happened*, starts this month.



A history of Ypsilanti's Depot Town Association

The Depot Town Association was founded in 1976 with its sole purpose dedicated to "preserving the unique character of the neighborhood and to the enhancement of its business climate."

Two events in recent years precipitated the renovation of Ypsilanti's run-down railroad district: (1) the arrival of the Michigan Artrain in 1976 (Artrain's five subsequent stops have provided milestones in the district's return to respectability) and (2) the establishment of the Ypsilanti Historic District Ordinance gave believability to the preservation ethic in the community.

Neighbors organized and wrote a Constitution and Bylaws, incorporated with the State of Michigan, and gained 501(c)3 tax-exempt status with the Federal government. The 1976 *Depot Town Study* became the official 'plan' of development for public and private sectors in the district and set members about the task of winning a Community Development Block Grant through the City for new sidewalks, street paving and landscaping of the block-long district. Active political involvement followed these successes, with Depot Towners serving on virtually every council, committee and commission in the area. This involvement led to their designing and overseeing new street lighting, Market Plaza paving and landscaping, public grants for park improvements, an outdoor amphitheater, a stage, replacing the bridge to the district, rebuilding the railroad crossing, the installation of a pedestrian bridge, signs along the entries to the City and hundreds of thousands of dollars worth of private improvements to the individual buildings which house 40 commercial spaces and 40 residential spaces. By 1980, fully half the buildings of the district were owner-occupied.

Neighborhood events became the focus of a reborn ethic of neighborliness: a Sidewalk Celebration over all that new concrete grew into the annual Ypsilanti Heritage Festival which drew more than 350,000 people in its eleventh year; Boomer Days was a smaller mid-summer effort which remembered the hobo days of railroading and continued for six consecutive years; the annual Victorian Holiday gave birth to Riverside Park's Festival of Lights from mid-November until January which has drawn up to 200,000 people for each of the last three years.

DTA was instrumental in developing the Ypsilanti Farmers' Market in the adjacent Freighthouse in cooperation with the City of Ypsilanti and Michigan State University's Cooperative Extension Service. That City-owned facility now functions as the area's rustic convention center.

The Association was first called *DTA* by the local press in 1979 and such initial status told its officers that it needed an official address. A fund raising campaign brought a one-hundred-year-old Grand Trunk caboose to the block to serve as a district meeting place. Over the years it has been the home to such sub-organizations as the Historic Depot Town Foundation, the Depot Town Antique Engine Club, the Depot Town Antique Dealers Association, the Depot Town Engineering Society (a teens group), the Depot Town Artists & Artisans and countless dinner parties, birthday parties and special events.

The Depot Town Rag became the district's monthly newspaper in 1976, as well, and continues to be sponsored entirely by the district's business community. Through its print media, DTA published several promotional brochures touting the district and was active in soliciting a new Radisson hotel for the community. Close cooperation with the Ypsilanti Visitors & Convention Bureau has brought many bus tours, home tours, day-long visits and short stop-overs to the district.

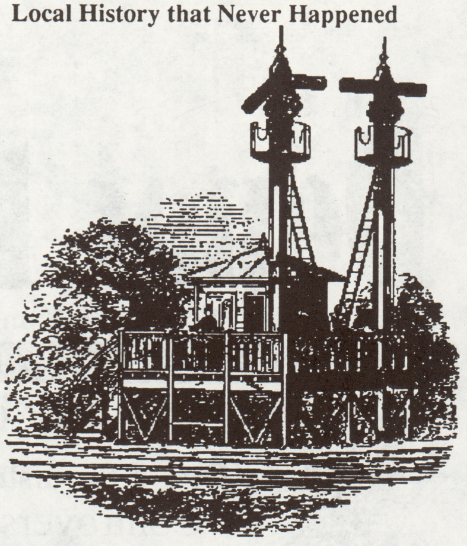
Early in its promotions, DTA members identified three main vehicles to obtain the district's chosen objectives: *antiques, entertainment, food* had become the *troika* which pulled the clientele, the businesses and promoters together. The Association sent up jazz promotions in the manner of New Orleans and Chicago and it sold well. A Winter Jazz Series saw as many as six big events each year with 'name' performers drawing fans from a wider area than anticipated. This grew into the Frog Island Festival with The Ark which now celebrates its sixth year of cooperation with Eastern Michigan University's radio station, WEMU; and the Heritage Jazz Competition held in conjunction with August's Heritage Festival with WEMU. All the events are widely respected by the music community.

Annual elections, according to DTA's Constitution, keep this activity moving forward, with the newest turn of events being a rebirth of merchant involvement and commercial direction previously thought unattainable.

As of 1990, DTA enjoys working affiliations with WEMU, The Ark, the Ypsilanti Chamber of Commerce, the Washtenaw Council for the Arts, and Neighborhood Associations of Michigan.

Edifice Complex:

Local History that Never Happened



Farthing's Folly:

They all laughed when Fred Farthing built his "Synchronistic Switching Station," but Thomas Alva Edison sent him a memo showing genuine interest in the project. Farthing put up with derision and ridicule throughout most of his years in Ypsilanti, but he stood on the platform every day and sounded the noon whistle, nonetheless.

After thirty years of creative hopelessness, Farthing left town in disgrace when he finally had to concede that the railroad was on the other side of the Huron River.

[**Editor's note:** As announced by the bunch of louts on Page One, this month begins a series of dubious achievements in the history of Depot Town and environs. It will run as long as the readership will tolerate. Send complaints - along with your dues - to The Depot Town Association, down in the Old Caboose. Or send *your own versions* of local history. We might as well be making it, ourselves!]

At the Farmers' Market:

January 5th - Origami
January 12th - Tea Tasting Workshop
January 19th - Youth Sales
January 26th - Crafts Sell-out

8 am - 3 pm Wednesdays & Saturdays

At the Ypsilanti Farmers' Market -Wednesdays & Saturdays:

MESSINA'S CHEESE
At the Ypsilanti Farmers' Market
Wed or Sat 483-1480 or 459-1995 any time
Continuing low prices for AMISH CHICKENS
Bring in ad for 10c off per lb.

J U D Y ' S
1st CLASS FARE

- Gourmet Coffee Beans whole or freshly ground
- Fresh Cut Flowers
- Rocky Top Jams & Non Alcoholic Sparkling Wines
- Uncle Bum's Romesco Sauce

Saturdays at the Farmers' Market

Depot Town Sourdough Bakery
310 N. River St. 313-487-8110

Yet another song for the City . . .

Code Ode:

Everything's up to code in Ypsilanti!

[There's nothing like it in *Oklahoma!*]
Everything's up to code in Ypsilanti;
they've made it just as safe as it can be.
You've got to get a permit now,
for everything you do
And, if you build without it,
they'll come right in after you.
It's a bigger deal than crime and drugs
and prostiution, too!
And I hear they'd like to legislate them, too.
You bet!
I hear they'd like to legislate them, too!

I bought this old place from my former landlord;
he told me I could make a lot of dough.
The Inspectors came and wrote us up
and then began to preach
They made us put a light switch
into every place you reach
And now the rent's so high the tenants
can't afford the breech
That's about as far as the City ought to go.
Yes, sir!
That's about as far as the City ought to go!

No one cares if you are really handy,
or if you've got the tools and plans
and such.
The thing that counts is how it's stamped —
and if you're certified,
And even if you brother-in-law
was standing by your side
You've got to prove that it's OK
and up to union grade.
You've got to get the work done by the rule.
Uh huh!
You've got to get the work done by the rule!

Everything in Ypsi is old fashioned;
they don't build them *that way* any more.
The relics that we worship now
are frighteningly old
And every one of those old dumps
was built before the code!
And that's what worries us about the plastic,
modern mode:
Will they ever get to be "antique?"
Oh, no!
Will they ever get to be "antique?"

[There's more, much more. As usual, the local folk song festival is endless. Come to an upcoming meeting of the Depot Town Association one Thursday night and get your free copy and sing along with the crowd. Or write your own. You won't need a permit. -ed.]

a PATCHWORK of commercial creativity -- *Depot Town!*

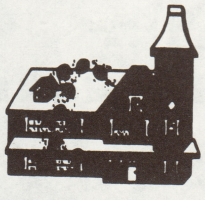
WANTED:
Cookie Monsters and Cookie Makers
to participate in a Depot Town
Cookie of the Year Contest
in late February/ealy March
Watch next month's *Rag* for more details
or, for more information, to pre-register
or to volunteer to help judge,
call *The Cookie People* at 482-3463.

Consider *Quilt Themes* for your 1991 advertising! A patchwork of commercial creatvity!

Aubree's
Pool is Cool
39 East Cross Street

Teachers Shop & LEARNING CENTER, LTD.
YOUR K12 CONNECTION
all materials for CLASSROOMS & CURRICULA
313-482-8373
16 E. CROSS STREET
YPSILANTI, MI. 48198

THE OCCASION STATION



Still serving *Miller's* Ice Cream
NOW OFFERING . . .
• Cards • Wrapping Paper • Candy
• Helium Balloons • Cookies • Gifts
• Jelly Bellys • Recycled Paper Products
• Mugs • Stationery • T-shirts • Souvenirs
Open All Year 485-7546
42 East Cross
YPSILANTI, MI

Copy for 1991 *Rag* sponsors is due at The Old Caboose by the 3rd Thursday Sponsors are encouraged to pay for the year in advance whenever possible.

T E D'S
Auto Electric
307 North River • 483-1238

MYOMASSOLOGIST
Joan M. Scully
Massage Therapy
434-5317
Recovery Oriented• Women's Issues
Stress Relief • Therapeutic Massage
Reflexology
Gift Certificates available

PIANO LESSONS
in my Depot Town studio
Steve Gustafson
485-3765

CITY BODY
20 East Cross Street
Front end alignment
& Collision repair

Cable TV & Video games FREE Delivery
Red Rooster Pizza
. . . and Dairy Bar
37 East Cross • 483-4555

Ike's Depot Barbershop
40 East Cross

Depot Town Association, Inc. December, 1990

Guests: Mark Cotter, Ypsilanti City Planner Steve VanSteinhouse.

The minutes of the December meeting were approved as published. Should the Association publish direct quotes of public officials at our meetings? With follow-ups by phone? Maybe.

DTA/Ark contract for Frog Island is complete.

Communications: CBC and DTA officers plan to meet every other month to collaborate on shared issues. Michigan Treasury Department want more money. Travel Michigan seeks nominations for Tourism awards.

Treasury balance: $4306.15.

Membership chair, Bonni Rosen-Fine reports many responses to the recent campaign. (see box).

Rag report: Quilt theme kicks off in the Januray issue. All sponsors are up to date until the end of 1990. A new series on fake local history begins this month.

Five-year business plan to double foot traffic in the block approved by merchants, property owners, Association. Begins in June 1991 with a presentation to City Council (see excerpts at right). Property owners will collect video promotion costs from participating tenants.

A proposal to **develop the City-owned Freighthouse** into a full-time facility was present by Carolyn McKeever and a committee was formed to continue discussion with the City. Chair: Margaret Harner. Committee: Paul Fetters, Jerry Meadows, Mark Cotter. They hope to meet with the City Manager the last week in December.

City Planner, Steve VanSteinhouse commented on new directions for the City.

Cookie of the Year Contest was approved with a $25 budget and a due date in February.

Every-Saturday horse and buggy rides are possible, with DTA paying the liability insurance. Steve Gross will follow up.

Golden Goose Award: "Don't nobody give us no bad news." - The Wiz.

Best Yet Award -- to Jerry Tillman of the Trading Post, for opening and developing the largest retail space on East Cross Street.

Action Plans **from the Depot Town**
Five-year Business Plan:

- **Improvement of Storefronts**
- **Providing the Product**
- **Maintenance Program**
- **Promotion**
- **Signal Tower**
- **Activity Calendar**
- **Attracting Desired Businesses**
- **Public Participation**
- **Marketing**
- **Fund Raiser**
- **Street Lighting**
- **Bulletin Board**

Membership opportunity:

The Depot Town Association, Inc., is a nonprofit, tax exempt corporation dedicated to preserving the unique character and history of the Depot Town area and to ensuring the economic growth and stablity of the area.

Cut out and mail to:
DTA, 400 Market Place,
Ypsilanti, MI, 48198.

Name _____
Address _____
City _____ State_____ ZIP_____
__ Associate member $10.
__ Business/Property member $25.
__ Sustaining member $100.
__ Please mail *The Rag*. __I'll pick it up.

New or renewing DTA members:

River Street Antiques — Tom Francis
Ted's Auto Electric — Robert Woodside
William Thompson — Breakaway Travel
Gene & Georgina Fries — Tom & Bettie Dodd
Thomas C. Manchester, P.C.
Randall Parkes — Marlene Barr
John & Lois Porter — Donna & Lois Welch
Ja ck & Mar Lou Wiltse — A. William French
Councilmember V. Lois Wells — Eric Ward

New kids on our block:

River Street Antiques
306 North River Street
487-4580
Our specialty:
decorating with antiques

City Radiator
100 North River
483-2248

Trade a Paperback for one of Barb's for only 70c plus tax! Crazy!
Crazy Barb's
Paperback Book Exchange!
Mon-Sat 11am-6:00pm
50 East Cross **484-4564**

THE DEPOT TOWN RAG
A publication of the Depot Town Association, Inc. a nonprofit, tax-exempt corporation dedicated to preserving the unique character of the neighborhood and to the enhancement of its business climate.
-Tom Dodd, editor

The Depot Town Association, Inc.
A. William French, president
c/o The Old Caboose
400 Market Place
Ypsilanti, Michigan 48198

Active Memberships :
- Ypsilanti Chamber of Commerce
- Washtenaw Council for the Arts
- Neighborhood Associations of Michigan

($25 + $10 refundable deposit)
Call 483-4256.

January 1991

Depot Towners are invited to participate in any or all of the following activities for the good of this old commercial district:

Depot Town Association
17th , 7:30 p.m. Thursday,
The Old Caboose

Depot Town
Antique Engine Club
24th, 7:00 p.m. Thursday,
Freighthouse Coffeeshop

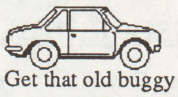
Depot Town Development Authority (DDA)
April 11, 1991
Freighthouse Coffeeshop

Upside Down
New Year
Don't Start Your
****
Turn Things Around this year at
Hansen's
Standard Printing
-483-0339-

Spend a night in the
CITY JAIL
for not getting a
BUILDING PERMIT

Stop and smell the flowers
(and pull a few weeds while you're down there)

All that
JaZz
has you on another committee. Enjoy your neighbors as you boost the block!

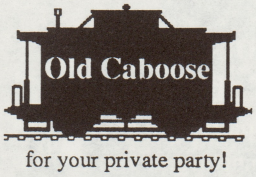


Get that old buggy fixed up in Ypsilanti's
CAR CARE center:
antique autos, radiators, auto electric, body shop

Train gate is down!
just like the old days
Stop & shop

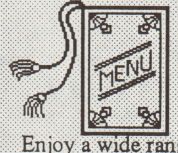
Stroll through the many events in historic
RIVERSIDE PARK

Rent the



for your private party!

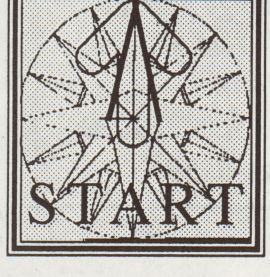
Eat out often!



Enjoy a wide range of unique food and drink establishments.

Win a
Historic Preservation Plaque
for the fine work on your old building!

Collect a carload of
ANTIQUES
from the Michigan Territory's first shopping mall



Watch out for
that dog
on the sidewalk!
He lives here.

Bring your 'stuff' to the
Recycling Center

Putter about with the
Depot Town Antique Engine Club

Get a T-shirt with a

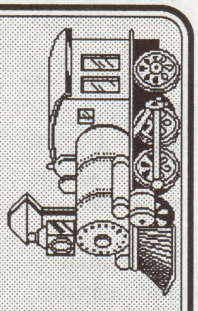
printed on it!

Take the
AATA
bus trip all the way from exotic Ann Arbor

Spend Wednesday & Saturday at
Ypsilanti's Farmers' Market

Walk across the 'TRIDGE' to beautiful . . .

FROG ISLAND PARK



Depot Town's CRAZY QUILT

The great old game that's an alternative to the malls' MONOPOLY!

FREE CARD:
No parking meters!
Park for two hours, FREE!

Rules of the Game:

- Park in any one of the 326 spaces around the district.
- Do not pay for parking. It's free.
- Cover Cross & River Streets and don't forget to walk between and behind the main buildings. There's plenty to see.
- Two lovely City parks are included.
- It is still permissable to wave at the trains and feed the ducks.
- Every shop is a game board participant. Keep a total of the heartfelt 'pleases' and 'thank-yous' as you play.
- Play as long as you get friendly "hellos" along the sidewalk.

Penalty:
Serve one term on City Council

No copyright.
Anyone can play.
Any time of the year!

Bulk Herbs, Spices, Teas, & Coffees

YPSI COOP FOOD

Fresh produce, Amish Chicken, Organic Beef

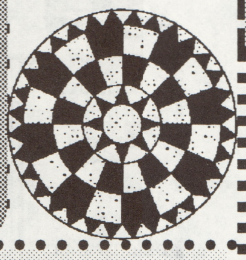
312 N. River St.
Open every day
Sunday 12-5; M,T,Th, F 10-7; Wed. 10-9; Sat. 9-7
483-1520

A DEPOT TOWN SAMPLER

Old Photos Reproduced
B&W/Color Printing, Double Prints
IMAGE PHOTO LAB
Mon. thru Fri. 10 to 6, Sat. 10 to 3
Michael Leach — Toni McCarthy
11 East Cross — **482-3370**

We love to buy Antiques
DEPOT EXCHANGE ANTIQUES
54 E. Cross • 482-1780
Next to Sidetrack
Professional Stripping & Refinishing

QUILTS



BELL, BOOK & CANDLE
44 E. Cross St. • 487-1970

KATRINA'S HAIR STUDIO

Featuring
KATRINA'S COSMETICS
483-3644
Matrix-Paul Mitchell

COUNT ON KELLY
FOR QUALIFIED TEMPORARY HELP

√Office Clerical
√Personal Computer
√Word Processing
√Data Entry
√Accounting
√Light Industrial
√Marketing
√Technical Support

Ann Arbor - 761-5700 • Ypsilanti - 482-7749
KELLY SERVICES — The Kelly Girl People

J&R Trading Post Mall & Antiques

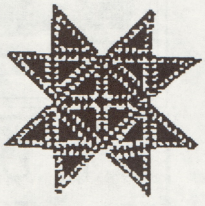
Old New In between | Records | Hats | Old fashioned candy
Jewelry | Mini mall | Gifts | Snacks Cards Glassware

21 East Cross • 483-5870

Hon's
Flowers & Fancies
46 East Cross
482-2124

A friendly, family kind of place
Olde Towne Coin & Gold
24 East Cross
We buy & sell coins, 14K jewelry
ANA member - appraisals
Mich. Jewelers Assn.
483-6155

RIVER ARTWORKS

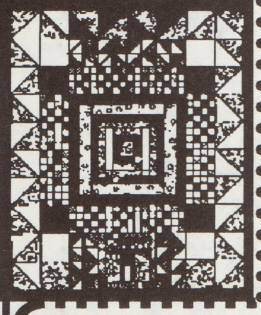


PROFESSIONAL CUSTOM FRAMERS
482-8785
48 EAST CROSS STREET
in Historic Depot Town
QUALITY• TIMELY SERVICE

Esquire Custom Drapery & Blinds

Custom Draperies
Vertical Blinds • 1" Blinds
Shutters • Shades • Wallpaper
Installation • Repairs
Ann Arbor 663-7011
Ypsilanti 482-6338
10 E. Cross St. Ypsilanti, MI 48198

Our Little Secret
Resale Clothing
& Other Niceties
23 E. Cross Street
483-3637



Now that we'verecycled everything else in the neighborhood, isn't it time we recycled this copy of *The Rag*?

JAMES MacDONALD'S ANTIQUES & APPLE ANNIE'S VINTAGE CLOTHING
29 East Cross • 481-0555

FOOD • FUN SPECIALTIES ANTIQUES

THOMPSON BUILDING MALL
Antiques and Stained Glass
412 North River • 483-3472
Buying & Selling of Estates and/or Single Items